

OTHER GEOGRAPHIES

There are a few other levels of geography, such as ZIP Code Tabulation Areas (ZCTAs), school districts and voting districts (VTDs), that can be used to determine neighborhood boundaries and to obtain data.

For more information about these and other geographies, see our Geographic Terms and Concepts:

<http://www.census.gov/geo/reference/terms.html>

USING TIGERWEB TO IDENTIFY YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

TIGERweb is a simple way to view our geographic boundaries on-line without having to download the data. The tool can be launched from:

http://tigerweb.geo.census.gov/tigerwebmain/tigerweb_main.html

In this tool, you can overlay geographic boundaries with aerial imagery to determine which type of geography most accurately represents your community.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE FOR UNDERSTANDING CENSUS GEOGRAPHY

Our Guide to State and Local Census Geography provides specific information about the geographic entities within each state.

<http://www.census.gov/geo/reference/geoguide.html>

LOCATING SHAPEFILES FOR YOUR SELECTED GEOGRAPHY

Shapefiles and generalized cartographic boundary files can be downloaded from the TIGER products webpage at:

<http://www.census.gov/geo/maps-data/data/tiger.html>

DEMOGRAPHIC, HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DATA

American FactFinder (AFF) is an online mapping and data dissemination tool that allows users to create, modify and download demographic data tables by a variety of geographic areas.

<http://factfinder2.census.gov>

QUESTIONS?

Call:
301-763-1128

E-Mail:
geo.geography@census.gov

FINDING DATA FOR MY COMMUNITY



DEFINING MY NEIGHBORHOOD AND/OR COMMUNITY

The Census Bureau has data for a variety of legal (i.e. counties, townships) and statistical areas (i.e. census blocks, urban areas). However, these boundaries may or may not correspond with locally recognized neighborhoods, subdivisions, or communities. There are several options for finding data for your neighborhood and community using census geography.

PLACES

The most common geography for defining communities is *Place*. There are two types of places the Census Bureau tabulates data for: *incorporated places* and *census designated places* (CDPs).

Incorporated places are legal entities such as cities, towns, villages, or boroughs.

CDPs are defined to provide data for settled concentrations of population, which are identifiable by name but are not legally incorporated. CDPs cannot exist within incorporated places. Neighborhoods within an incorporated place, such as Northridge in Los Angeles city, cannot be a CDP.

Local partners provide CDP boundaries to the Census Bureau every 10 years. The program participants may not report all locally known areas to the Census Bureau. CDPs change in between decennial censuses only when area from the CDP is annexed into an incorporated place.

COUNTY SUBDIVISIONS/MINOR CIVIL DIVISIONS

County subdivisions are the primary divisions of counties and county equivalents. They can be either legal entities (mainly *minor civil divisions*) or statistical entities (*census county divisions*). The MCDs in 12 states (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Wisconsin), can perform the same governmental functions as incorporated places. In these 12 states, it is likely your community is an MCD if it is not an incorporated place or CDP.

BUILDING BLOCK GEOGRAPHIES: USING CENSUS TRACTS, CENSUS BLOCK GROUPS AND CENSUS BLOCKS

If your community or neighborhood cannot be defined at the place or county subdivision levels, you can define the area using the smallest levels of geographies offered by the Census Bureau: *census tracts*, *block groups*, and *census blocks*.

CENSUS TRACTS are small subdivisions of counties delineated for statistical purposes. Tracts contain between 1,200 and 8,000 people. Their boundaries often follow visible features but can also follow invisible boundaries, such as those for incorporated places. Census tracts may be helpful, as neighborhood boundaries sometimes coincide with the boundaries of a census tract or group of tracts. For example, in the city of Los Angeles, the tracts are defined to match the community boundaries.

BLOCK GROUPS are statistical subdivisions of census tracts. They generally contain between 600 and 3,000 people. Users can choose to build their neighborhood boundaries with block groups if census tracts are too large.

CENSUS BLOCKS are the smallest level of geography delineated by the Census Bureau for statistical purposes. Like the census tracts, block boundaries can be visible features (i.e. streets, roads, streams) or invisible boundaries (i.e. school districts or townships). In densely populated areas, block boundaries are smaller and generally follow a city block. In rural areas, blocks can cover hundreds of square miles. Census block demographic data are available for the decennial census only.

Census tracts, block groups, and blocks can be grouped to more precisely define the neighborhoods or subdivisions that are not accurately represented by larger geographic areas.

NOTE ON ACS DATA:

If you are using the American Community Survey (ACS) datasets, note that census tracts and block groups are the lowest levels of geography offered in the ACS and are only available in the 5-year estimates. ACS data is more accurate for more populous geographic areas. Therefore, you should use the largest geographic area possible to define your community.